

KARO-ECHO Meeting

10 March 2019

Arlington Clubhouse

Present

Edward Carney	KM6UBY
Natalie DeJarlais	KM6UCF
Jay Fenton	KJ6WSS
Karen Leong Fenton	KK6ZPM
Andy Fuchs	AI6PW
Howdy Goudey	KE6BEE
Hal Graboske	KK6NDF
Ken Gustafson	KK6SRD
Kevin Janes (by phone)	ECFD
Jerry Michaelis	K6KOP
Robin Mitchell	N/A
Larry Nagle	N/A
Diane Richwine	KK6RED
Don Simon	NI6A
David Swanson	KJ6AAT
Davis Todhunter	KJ6PPR
Larry Vanselow	KK6GIO

Approval of February 2019 minutes

Karen moved to approve the February minutes; Larry seconded and all approved.

Meeting timing

Don moved to start future meetings at 7:00; Ken seconded and all approved.

We will plan to spend 60 minutes on business, followed by 30 minutes of training.

Recruitment

Karen described how a postcard could be mailed to local, inactive hams to encourage them to check out the Thursday net as well as the website. She proposes filtering out the active

people, and stated that with stamps at 35 cents, mailings would cost less than \$1 per recipient.

Edward has downloaded the list of local hams to an Excel spreadsheet. Kensington has 31 active hams; EC has 110; Richmond has 180. Another goal is to get more collaboration among the ham groups, though Don noted some concerns in this area.

No funding source has been identified for the mailing. Meanwhile, Hal requested that Edward forward the postcard text, which he and Don would like to review.

Robin volunteered to work with Karen and Edward on the project. Followup questions should be directed to this committee.

Handouts for CERT trainings

Don emphasized that we need a handout about disaster communications and what KARO-ECHO does for the CERT trainings. Hal will contact Chief Grupalo on Tuesday, March 12 about getting approval for a handout as well as the role of emergency communications and KARO-ECHO in CERT training.

Training

Don provided handouts with tear-off phone numbers for Ken Fowler's technician training that is being co-sponsored by KARO-ECHO. The course begins April 3 at the Arlington Park clubhouse. Don asked members to please post them at public places. Hal will see to it that it is passed out to the CERT trainees as an action item.

Don requested volunteers to help organize a HamCram. Jamuel, Dave, Howdy, and Andy offered to help.

Recruiting

Don requested assistance in locating a volunteer with video editing skills who could create a PR piece using photos, videos, and audio from the SET to show what we do. Karen said that DJ might be able to do this. Also Andy, Robin, Howdy, and Don are going to work on this as well as publicity for the coming GMRS/FRS CERT training to be held most likely in April.

Don reminded us that there's a critique of the February SET online with links to the audio and video.

Robin volunteered to work on a flyer that could be used at the El Cerrito 4th of July celebration CERT table as well as for the CERT classes. Howdy will also work on this.

Funding

Larry showed the letter from the IRS stating that we have acquired 501(c)(3) status. He will now change our status with the bank.

The current balance is \$137.70, and we owe \$300 in reimbursements to members. Larry has started a GoFundMe account; we also passed the hat around at today's meeting.

Larry requested help with writing grant proposals, and needs to know what equipment we need along with the costs. Hal knows a couple of grant writers and will check with them regarding availability and ideas. Howdy could write up a list of antenna needs and go kit contents for the grant applications.

Radio equipment and sites

Howdy has fixed the three broken Kenwood radios and we do not have any that need repairs at this point. Howdy, Jamuel. And Don are working to fix the Diamond X500HNA antenna.

Howdy reported that there are two El Cerrito clubhouses with radio equipment (Tassajara and Harding); there are three radios and two locations with antennas. One of the radios has an EC asset tag, Howdy would like for the radios to be in the hands of hams who would use them from time to time to ensure that they're operable. One radio (the old EC Senior Center radio) will go to the Go-kart that Don is making finishing touches on.

Issues with these installations:

Accessing inside radios in an emergency. The city of EC Parks dept. told Howdy that they want building officials to approve building entry in case of a disaster before entry will be allowed, which is completely impractical.

Lack of battery power at El Cerrito sites (but not a problem in Kensington)

CERT involvement: Don says CERT has to decide whether they want radios in these locations/assembly sites. Karen and Howdy questioned the need to rely on CERT for this

decision.

If we know that the parks are going to be used as staging areas in an emergency, we could install antennas that hams could connect to. Two options:

Pursue the access issue with EC Parks & Rec. Howdy stated that El Cerrito is tight with the clubhouse keys, and has issued only one set of keys for the Arlington clubhouse. They won't provide keys to get into buildings in case of emergency. Perhaps they would put keys in a lock box, but this is unclear.

The more likely option is to remove radios from the clubhouses and create portable go kits, connecting to an external antenna. It might be logical to focus on installing antennas at as many locations as possible, placing antenna hookups in sheltered areas of the buildings. An antenna at El Cerrito Sierra Vista Park would be particularly good as it has been established by Rob, the CERT AC, for EC4 as EC4 staging.

Karen suggested standardization of high gain antenna installations with lockboxes to allow access, and would like both ham band and GMRS antennas.

Hal suggested that we write a proposal for access to buildings with radio equipment. If the city will not approve, then we should propose installed antennas at each Park clubhouse equipped with outdoor external weatherproof access combination lock boxes; and if that is not approved, then we should remove all installed equipment and plan for fully equipped portable go-karts with gain antennas, radios, and batteries for maximum flexibility. Howdy, Don, and Robin will work on this proposal.

Fire station installations

Fire department staff will not be on site in an emergency. Fire stations do have emergency backup power. Howdy has not yet seen any existing equipment at the fire stations, but Don reports that the radios at Fire Station 65 in Kensington has been tested and works by Rob, Marian, and Jerry. Fire Stations 65, 71, and 72 have emergency generator power. Don recommends testing fire station equipment at least once a year. Rob is also planning to put KARO-ECHO binders in Fire Stations 71, 72, the EOC, and any other KaroEcho Clubhouses should those locations not be moved. If moved, the binders would be installed inside portable go-karts. .

Issue: What is the point of radios at fire stations or the parks if we don't know the city's

plan for emergency communications? Nobody in Kensington has contacted us for a drill. Colusa Circle may not end up being used. Harding is EC5, and we don't have any connection with the CERT AC there; while an additional problem at Harding is the lack of access and emergency power.

Batteries

David has information about batteries and possible discounts at Batteries & Bulbs, as well as the availability of surplus batteries. Hal suggested putting this on the agenda for the next meeting.

KCC Radio & Antenna

Jerry reported that the Kensington Community Center radio is in a locked cabinet and needs to be removed by April, before the building is re-roofed. Jerry will handle that and take it to the police station. They may be able to leave the antenna in place during the roof work.

Training Exercise - SET Review

Kevin Janes reported via phone that he came down for the SET, and that it was good to see it taking place. They successfully fired up the radio at the EOC, and he thought the exercise went very well. Hal confirmed that Kevin will continue to be the liaison between KARO-ECHO and fire department, which Kevin confirmed. Fire station access would go through Kevin.

Karen asked that we acknowledge the excellent work of the February SET organizers.

Don made some observations regarding the SET:

Don was pleased that Kevin was willing to open the EOC at City Hall, where the radio and antenna worked well. All stations could talk directly to the EOC.

Communications between certain areas needed relays. We need to work on accuracy and speed in relaying. Relay is an important aspect of ham radio.

Net control should always ask for a designated relay station - a location that would have different propagation.

We need more trained net control volunteers. We have 8 net control volunteers, but Howdy is always happy to have more. Don points out that with 24x7 coverage in an emergency,

we'll need more people able to handle net control.

During check-ins, NCS should acknowledge the alpha groups after the pause, before asking whether there are additional checkins. They can be acknowledged by suffix or by name (if unambiguous).

Over 40 messages were passed during the SET, and Don would like us to be able to pass 80-100 during the next SET.

Succinct messages are critical. Avoid unnecessary adjectives, for example, we are supposed to act as transparent communicators and not alter messages. That may work well in a controlled message center environment with trained message center managers (such as in a FEMA trailer or office); but in the field when working with inexperienced CERT volunteers and shelter managers, it's ok to condense messages, especially with inexperienced or frantic personnel. It would be better if CERT trained people to create radio-style succinct messages. A lot of traffic can overload the EOC at one time if strategy is left to the wind. We'll continue to increase our efficiency and traffic count in future exercises, as well as emphasize the need for maximizing CERT area to AREA sharing resources and mutual aid.

Seven main training points were covered:

Mapping: we determined who could talk to whom. All CERT Areas could communicate with the EOC; thus proof of concept was verified. There were antenna problems between CERT staging areas, especially with rubber ducks. Those folks should consider portable gain antennas (other wise relays will be required). .

Message handling: there were problems that we can work on.

Emergency power: All stations were using emergency power except Harding Clubhouse and Tassajara Park Clubhouse. This needs to be rectified so that all stations can utilize sustained emergency power.. Tassajara has been trying to get this for the clubhouse for a year, but has not yet has received approval for a battery and float charger installation.

We had effective dispatch of mobiles to various sites and portable stations deployed to the known CERT area ICPs and disaster sites (Bart derailment, etc).

Portable go kits were very useful (radio, antenna, tripod, coax, battery as evidenced by Ken6, NCS, EC4/EC3, and EC7. The four mobile stations also provided flexibility in function.

Operators displayed their ability to change frequency allowing net frequency freedom to direct maximum traffic flow. Our facility in relaying traffic was improved. Problem areas were identified.

Net Operation: Facility in operating within the framework of a directed net was improved.

Remember that when directed by net control to a new frequency, we need to establish contact with the other person on the main frequency before moving to the new frequency.

Karen requested a presentation of how Howdy and Robin did their net control work, tracking frequencies in use and where operators were assigned to communicate.

Additional takeaways:

In HF, a couple of kilohertz is sufficient to space stations apart because of narrow bandwidths. However on FM even 15 KHz is not sufficient separation if an adjacent station has a very strong signal thus bleeding over into the adjacent frequencies. .

The first person who arrives at new frequency should ask whether the frequency is in use. How long should we wait to make contact on the new frequency before returning to NCS? Don says about one minute.

It's important to know your own radio and bring it to the site.

146.430 is too close to our primary frequency to be used as our secondary frequency. Thus it was voted that we change our secondary frequency to 146.475 MHz. .

Standard Operating Procedure is to send mobiles out to check on people who "disappear."

It's important to practice the phonetic alphabet.

Drop the key often, Howdy requests. We must permit others to interrupt.

All punctuations like commas, periods etc should be voiced as x-ray and written down as an "X". It counts as one word in the word count (check). There is no x-ray at the end of the message. Just say "break."

Location on the modified 213 is sometimes crucial. It's important to include the location.

The bottom of the KaroEcho modified 213 form is primarily for relay usage indicating who the message was received from and whom it was sent to with appropriate times and dates .

When there is a relay, should all three parties go to the new frequency during the relay? It depends on many factors. It's at net control's discretion. We need to train on this.

Nothing beats a good antenna and a good radio, because that minimizes the need for relay.

NALCO is planning a drill in May with the Berkeley Disaster Preparedness Network and BeCERTAINN. NALCO's first commitment is to the Berkeley Fire department.

The meeting was adjourned.

